

# Syria, Bahrain: A Tale of Two Uprisings... One Fabricated, the Other Forgotten

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The violent turmoil in Syria and Bahrain over the past year, taken together, provides a sharp comparative case study of the deception and hypocrisy of Western governments and the mainstream media.

It also points up the nefarious role of the pro-Western Arab states, in particular the Persian Gulf monarchies headed by Saudi Arabia.

Last week marked an exact anniversary for Syria and Bahrain. On the 15 March 2011, Syria saw the beginning of an armed insurgency described as “anti-government protests” in the Southern city of Daraa, on the border with Jordan. While the state forces of President Bashar Al Assad responded ruthlessly, from the outset it was clear that the anti-government “protesters” were heavily armed and well organised.

The events in Syria mirrored those in Libya, where opposition groups were also heavily armed and ready to use violence from the outset. In both Syria and Libya, the apparent protests were distinctly different from those seen in most other Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen and Bahrain, where there was a groundswell of popular opposition to the incumbent Western-backed regimes and where dissent was largely peaceful.

This key difference can be explained because Western powers and their proxies, such as Israel, Turkey and the Gulf Arab states, were instrumental in arming and directing the supposed anti-government opposition in both Syria and Libya.

Special forces from NATO powers Britain and France were, tellingly, active on the ground from the get-go, lending their expertise in techniques of sabotage and terrorism.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar in particular were also instrumental in driving events in Syria and Libya, providing financial support, weapons, covert fighters and strident diplomatic backing for the self-styled “transitional councils”. In the instance of Libya, NATO’s involvement was scaled up to a full-blown aerial bombing campaign to assist the so-called rebels on the ground. Such overt NATO aggression has not yet transpired in the case of Syria, but it is a contingency that Western governments are only shying away from for now out of political calculation.

To get back to Syria’s comparative twin in this case study, Bahrain, the Persian Gulf kingdom also saw an upsurge in violence on the 15 March 2011 – but for markedly different reasons. In the month prior to that date, Bahrain had witnessed a truly mass uprising against the Al Khalifa monarchy.

Peaceful demonstrations in the capital, Manama, drew crowds of up to 300,000 – nearly half the indigenous population of the tiny oil-rich kingdom. The protest movement against the US-backed autocratic Sunni rulers had set up a permanent peace camp near the financial district of the capital. After four weeks of peaceful rallies calling for the downfall of the monarchy, the Bahraini uprising was ruthlessly attacked by the combined state forces of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the other members of the so-called Gulf Peninsula Shield Force which had crossed the King Fahd Causeway linking Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The military invasion to crush a civilian pro-democracy movement – one that was merely calling for an elected government to replace the decades-long dictatorship of the Al Khalifa dynasty – was given the green light by both Washington and London. [1]

Of the many tragic ironies in this case study, perhaps the one that takes the dubious laurels for notoriety is the role of Saudi Arabia. Here we have the most repressive regime in the world: a ruthless, absolute monarchy ruled by the decrepit Al Saud family that has brutally crushed peaceful pro-democracy protests over the past year in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, and elsewhere in its oil-rich Eastern Province. Across the 25-kilometre causeway in Bahrain, Saudi-backed troops have subjected the unarmed civilian population to unrelenting violence over 12 months. Every night, Bahraini villages are smothered in teargas fired by Saudi troops and Bahraini mercenary police recruited with foreign Sunni expatriates. [2] [3] Proportionate to its population, the toll of Bahraini civilians killed at the hands of pro-regime forces runs into thousands – comparable to that of Syria. However, in Syria, the death toll includes some 50 per cent of victims from state military who have been combating an armed opposition that is equipped and fomented by Saudi Arabia, among several other foreign powers, including NATO.

Nevertheless, the unelected and widely reviled regime in Bahrain continues to enjoy unblemished membership of the Arab League. By contrast, Syria's Bashar Al Assad government – which appears to have popular support – has had its membership of the Arab League suspended – a sanction that was vehemently drummed up by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf dictatorships that invaded Bahrain to extirpate a popular, peaceful pro-democracy movement. Nauseatingly, the royal despots of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar have made bombastic calls for the secular government of Syria to step down and give way to political reforms – in the face of violence that has been fuelled in part by these despots.

The temptation to award Saudi Arabia the dubious laurels for hypocrisy and deception must be resisted, however. Reprehensible and disgusting though it is, the Al Saud regime still does not come close to Washington, London and their Western allies, including the mainstream media, for their utter cynicism.

Bashar Al Assad is roundly denounced by Obama, Clinton, Cameron and Hague; while Bahrain's King Hamad Al Khalifa is given the red-carpet treatment in Washington and London, and roundly praised as “an important ally”.

Co-conspirators with Saudi Arabia, the Western powers and their propaganda machine have unleashed a violent conflict in Syria and branded it a “popular uprising” – part of a heroic, Western-romanticized Arab Spring. [4] In reality, the events in Syria are a squalid fabrication, not unlike those in Libya, designed to serve the cynical geopolitical interests of the Western imperial powers in the world's oil-well region. The disposal of Al Assad's Syria, a non-vassal state, is a key prize for the Western imperialists and their Arab stooges. Clarion calls to Syria for democracy and human rights are sickeningly hollow and baseless and

designed to create a pretext for illicit regime change.

How do we know? Because Bahrain is the Litmus test for credibility. In the kingdom of Bahrain where a true pro-democracy Arab Spring is actually struggling to bear fruit, the Western powers, their media and their tyrannical Arab proxies have done everything to kill it, bury it and to forget it.

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NOTES:

[1] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=24181>

[2] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=24252>

[3] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=25909>

[4] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=29765>

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Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website Globalresearch.ca. He is a Master's graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during

## 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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